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Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Challenges in the Sahel region

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Challenges in the Sahel region

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel; Mr. Jean-Paul Laborde, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and Assistant Secretary-General; Ms. Monique Barbut, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; and Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Coordinator of the Association des femmes peules autochtones du Tchad.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Ibn Chambas, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Niamey.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in this meeting: Mr. Pierre Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, and Mr. Angel Losada, European Union Special Representative for the Sahel.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ibn Chambas.

Mr. Ibn Chambas: I thank the Security Council for once again giving me the opportunity to brief it on challenges to peace, security and stability in West Africa, particularly in the Sahel region. I speak from Niamey, where I have just met with President Mahamadou Issoufou as part of a tour of the five Sahel countries that are on the front line of humankind's struggle with climate change. I will be travelling to Ouagadougou right after this briefing, and will be sure to bring my hopes and the Council's concern for the impact of climate change on peace and security in that region.

West Africa and the Sahel have for some time now been faced with multifaceted challenges. From Dakar to Djibouti, climate change is one of the most important of those challenges through its impact on societies and their livelihoods, as it directly affects security, development and stability. In that context, climate change becomes a fundamental threat to human security. In the maritime domain, natural resources are underregulated and overexploited, and criminal activities and piracy are threatening security and economic activities. Erosion and rising sea levels constitute another serious threat.

Both regions experience various unresolved conflicts, ranging from the renewed insurgency in the Niger delta and deadly clashes between farmers and herders over scarce and dwindling agricultural resources, to terrorist activities in northern Mali and north-eastern Nigeria, which have spilled over to the neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. These threats go hand in hand with organized crime, trafficking and violent extremism, and are exacerbated, by recurring drought that climate change, by all accounts, has rendered more frequent and hazardous. The landlocked character of the area and poor transport links are yet another strain preventing regional trade that could provide employment and stimulate economies.

On the positive side, the fight against terrorist activities is beginning to yield tangible and encouraging results owing to strengthened cooperation between the concerned countries and the significant support of partners. In the short run, however, more effort is still needed to back the military campaign against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin area in terms of financial and operational support for the Multinational Joint Task Force, and to provide assistance to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of displaced persons and refugees, facilitating their return to safe areas and assisting them to rebuild their livelihoods.

Further west, strengthened regional cooperation and sustained international support are also required to help the countries of the Sahel address the threat of terrorism that continues to spread beyond northern Mali and into West Africa and the Sahel. The United Nations remains committed to playing its part within the parametres of its mandate to help the region face these security challenges. In the long run, there is a growing awareness of the need to address the underlying causes of the crisis, which are underdevelopment, poor governance and attendant poverty, all of which are, at least in part, linked to climate change.

The theme of the second Regional Security Summit, held in Abuja on 14 May, "Consolidating collective efforts for regional peace and development", testified to the willingness of stakeholders to focus on the economic potential of Lake Chad to alleviate poverty and bring development to the region.

In the Sahel region, the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel guides the United Nations system's multidimensional engagement to address the root causes of instability in the region. Mitigating the impact of climate change, which features prominently under the resilience pillar of the Strategy, is the major objective of the Strategy. That has been achieved in close partnership with such actors as the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, which supports environmental monitoring and the governance of natural resources.

The Boko Haram onslaught has galvanized attention to the devastating affects of climate change impacting the Lake Chad Basin area. To mention just one, the surface area of Lake Chad shrank from 22,000 square kilometres in 1960 to 1,700 square kilometres in 1985. Since then, it has rebounded to about 8,000 square kilometres, showing the unpredictability of external shocks and severely straining people's coping mechanisms. Lake Chad, despite its vulnerability, is blessed with a rich biodiversity that offers opportunities for fishing, agriculture and livestock farming. It directly provides livelihoods to about 2 million people, while at the same time constituting a food-exporting hub that supplies nearly 13 million people, including inhabitants of the Chadian capital, N'Djamena, and the capital of Borno state in Nigeria, Maiduguri.

The economic opportunities of the Lake led to significant migration movements in the past, the consequences of which prove challenging today. As of 2015, the Lake Chad Basin was home to up to 50 million people, whereas its resources have decreased sharply. It is anticipated that the population will again double by 2030. The importance and urgency of restoring the productive capacities of Lake Chad in order to prevent crises in the future cannot be overemphasized.

Another important area of note is the Niger River Basin area. It is an enormous resource for sustaining and improving livelihoods, as well as economic growth in the Sahel, but is now quickly dwindling as a result of the impact of extreme climate change and rainfall variability along the Niger River, a mainstay of the Niger River Basin. The Basin covers nine countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte D'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria. Seven of those nine countries are among the 20 poorest countries in the world. Up to 70 per cent of the 130 million people in the Basin area live in rural communities amid food insecurity — a situation that can only get worse, as the population is expected to double between now and 2050. Without real concerted and tangible efforts for those countries, with international support to address the acute challenges confronting the inhabitants of the Basin, the consequences in the future could be horrific when the Niger River, along its 4,200 kilometre course, begins to dry up, as can be visible in some sections already.

I would also like to mention the Great Wall initiative to combat desertification, which was conceived in 2005 by the former President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, adopted by the African Union in 2007 and signed by participating countries in N'Djamena in 2010. The Great Green wall is another example of a long-term approach to attack the root causes of poverty and marginalization. In fact, the ongoing security deterioration due to deadly confrontations between farmers and cattle breeders in some regions of Nigeria is just another reminder of the devastating effects of desertification.

Faced with those challenges, West African and Sahel countries are at a crossroads. While the responsibility for the implementation of those plans rests with the Governments concerned, national budgets are already being put under additional strain for higher security spending, such as is the case in the Niger, where I am today. External factors like insecurity in Libya and North Africa and jihadists returning from the Middle East are challenges beyond the scope of individual Governments and require collective international action. Thankfully, support is starting to be forthcoming. The European Union has already announced that €120 million from the Trust Fund for Africa has been earmarked for security — a point that I believe Ambassador Angel Losada may confirm.

However, humanitarian needs in the Lake Chad Basin area continue to grow, with approximately 9.2 million people in need of assistance. More than 2.4 million people have been driven out of their homes due to terrorist activities, of whom 1.5 million are children. Up to 90 per cent of the displaced have found refuge with host communities, placing a heavy strain on

their resources and weakening their ability to withstand shock. Despite that dire humanitarian situation, of the $535 million requested for humanitarian assistance in the region, only 10 per cent has been received.

Two days ago, world leaders gathered around the Secretary-General in Istanbul to consider ways and means to jointly make the world hospitable for all. Among the five core responsibilities defined by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "One humanity: shared responsibility" (A/70/709), I would like in particular to highlight responsibility one — "political responsibility to prevent and end conflicts" — an responsibility four — change people's lives, from delivering aid to ending need", which very much apply to the situation in the Lake Chad Basin areas and the Sahel.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the issues I have cited here have been thoroughly reviewed over the years. The problems have been identified, as have the set of actions to be taken to address them. A number of sound initiatives exist, and yet there is a feeling of frustration because results are not as tangible as one would wish them to be. Pooling efforts to rationalize the implementation of existing plans would go a long way in achieving our common goals.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Ibn Chambas for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Laborde.

Mr. Laborde (*spoke in French*): We are meeting here today to discuss the links between security and climate change in the Sahel. Is that a perception or a reality? Given that the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate is in charge of the fight against terrorism, I will frame my intervention from the perspective of the potential impact of climate change and global warming on it.

In the absence of concrete data or studies to establish such a correlation, it is difficult to say with confidence that such an impact exists. However, we can venture to say that climate change can be an aggravating factor leading to human insecurity and more conflicts, as recalled by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel. We also know that terrorism feeds on conflict. We have an illustration in the Sahel, which is experiencing a proliferation of terrorist groups. For years, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in Western Africa, Ansar Eddine — in Mali, the Niger and Libya — and Boko Haram — in the Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria — have recruited from what I would call a bottomless pool of candidates for terrorism. It is therefore essential to prevent conflicts and address their causes in order to stem terrorism.

However, climate change cannot alone contribute to insecurity. It must be accompanied by other socio-political variables, such as poor governance, local conflicts over ownership of natural resources, economic instability and youth unemployment. A lack of training and jobs for young people leads them to find a solution to their alienation in crime, which allows them a way out, even temporarily, of poverty. Such disillusionment can lead to radicalization via actions by terrorist groups aimed primarily at young people — not just in Africa and the Sahel, but throughout the world.

In a recent study by the United Nations Development Programme study initiated by the Executive Directorate and conducted in 2015 among border populations of eight Sahel countries on their perceptions of the factors of insecurity and violent extremism, it was found that continued desertification and ecosysment degradation were seen as a form of human insecurity that pushed young people into violent extremism. I would add, "and who knows, to acts of terrorism?" The plundering of natural resources, such as the smuggling of rare woods in West Africa, leads not only to a degradation of ecosystems but may in the long term have significant consequences on the socioeconomic balance of the region by increasing the vulnerability of populations, thereby creating fertile ground for the recruitment of young people who may then be doomed to destitution by organized criminal groups and terrorist groups.

That brings me to the links between transnational organized crime and terrorism. The Security Council has addressed that issue on several occasions, in particular in resolution 1373 (2001), which establishes the foundation for the Committee's action against terrorism — our Chair is also its Chair — and that of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) on the links between transnational organized crime and terrorism. The position of the Council was very clear when it stated that it:

> "Notes with concern the close connection between international terrorism and transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, money-laundering, illegal arms trafficking, and illegal movement of

nuclear, chemical, biological and other potentially deadly materials" (*resolution 1373 (2001), para. 4*).

Those links are indeed a challenge and a source of concern to the national authorities of the Sahel, the region that is our focus today. We counted the cases that have been brought before the courts in the Sahel, and despite the low number of cases that establish those facts, the zones of convergence, from straightforward taxation of activities of criminal groups that operate in the territory under the control of terrorist groups — by which we mean taxation by terrorist groups that control territories and engage in organized crime — in all likelihood they directly implicate terrorist groups in activities arising from organized crime.

Organized criminal groups and terrorist groups may have different objectives, including those that affect the environment. Nevertheless, the pooling of their criminal techniques or networks can be mutually beneficial. That is the important point. In total, between 2013 and 2014 trafficking in drugs, weapons and tobacco reportedly yielded nearly $3.5 billion, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Given that fact, we have to underscore here that we do not know the exact percentage of that funds that go directly to terrorist groups.

The very porous borders of a region that is already unstable, the large size of the informal economy, the low amount of banking and corruption are all additional factors that, with climate change, facilitate the entrenchment of trafficking routes through the Sahel to North Africa or Europe, in particular the route of cocaine from South America, that of cannabis resin from North Africa, the trafficking of migrants towards Europe or Asia, or arms trafficking from Libya or East Africa. In the Sahel, mass migration, which is also one of the consequences of global warming, has put a lot of pressure on the border control agencies and reduced their ability to monitor the use of different forms of trafficking by those terrorist and organized crime groups.

The recent terrorist attacks in Bamako, Ouagadougou and Grand-Bassam are illustrations of the capacity for action of terrorist groups thriving in the region, especially Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and Al-Mourabitoun, which have claimed those attacks. This violence has also demonstrated that those terrorist groups can strike below the Sahel region, which is under stricter control because of the presence of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and Operation Barkhane. Their ability to bypass secure zones demonstrates once again, if it were necessary, the extreme adaptility and flexibility of these terrorist organizations, which operate on the principle of attacking where they are not expected — in the Sahel but also beyond. In other words, it must be strongly emphasized that no single country in the region is safe from the terrorist threat.

Certainly, in the area of Lake Chad, Boko Haram has suffered serious setbacks due to the mobilization of Nigerian security forces and the concerted action of countries of the region through the Multinational Joint Task Force. However, that terrorist group continues to hit civilian populations hard through the mass use of improvised bombs and suicide bombers, half of whom are women and at least 20 per cent are minors.

The situation in Libya is also a source of concern for peace and security in the Sahel. CTED is very closely following the evolution of the terrorist threat in that country, especially the rise of Da'esh and its affiliates there. I underscore, among other things, the opening of training camps of that terrorist group on Libyan territory, where some foreign terrorist fighters might be trained before returning eventually to their countries of origin to carry out terrorist acts. We also need to carefully monitor the very aggressive recruiting methods used by Da'esh with nationals of the Maghreb and Sahel countries and their possible haven in Libya. Due to underdevelopment, lack of solid State institutions and climate change, these recruits are easy pickings for Da'esh.

Libya, in which Da'esh is present in the coastal city of Sirte, could therefore serve as an expansionist platform since it is, for now, a hotbed of destabilization for the Sahel, and even for Europe, and remains the source of the proliferation of all types of weapons in the region. In that regard, many weapons convoys have been intercepted in northern Niger, near the Salvador Pass, a historical crossroads for trafficking between Libya and northern Niger. A United Nations report on arms trafficking in Libya, conducted by a Panel of Experts, stresses the alarming rate of Libyan arms proliferation in more than 12 countries, including Mali. The report underscores the presence of not only small arms and heavy weapons, but also mines and anti-aircraft defence systems. Apart from terrorist groups, that influx of weapons also promotes all types of crime in the Sahel.

Those terrorist groups are a complex threat that is constantly changing in form, scope and methods. The transnational operational capacity of these terrorist groups lies in their flexibility to adapt, innovate and quickly reorganize, while keeping their harmful power intact despite the efforts of countries of the region and the international community. The attack in Bamako on 7 March — the first since the terrorists made northern Mali their outpost some 15 years ago — was a painful reminder for us. Despite the actions of the Blue Helmets and the forces hunting them down, terrorist groups still enjoy fertile ground in the Sahel.

Since the threat is flexible, innovative and adaptable, the United Nations and its Member States must also put in place rapid, fluid and flexibility responses to find effective solutions to the threat, while making full use of international cooperation mechanisms, in accordance with the rule of law and human rights. That is why the consideration of those elements by the Council and its subsidiary bodies — CTED; the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida,and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities; MINUSMA, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations — is so important. As also underscored in his briefing, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa pointed out the urgent need to find political solutions to the current problems in the Sahel because terrorist groups and organized crime are slipping quietly into the lawless areas, to the greatest detriment of everyone.

Given the facts that I have just mentioned, it is essential that the countries of the region put in place a number of different measures to prevent terrorist attacks on their territory, or at least to diminish their impact so as to ensure that innocent lives are lost and no act of terrorism goes unpunished. That is the message that the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate transmitted through a series of scheduled visits to the region since April 2016.

It is clear that the United Nations system as a whole is intensifying its cooperation and assistance to address climate change and support sustainable economic and social development in order to effectively fight against terrorism and armed conflict. But those efforts to promote sustainable development cannot succeed without improving security in areas beset by conflict and terrorism, and the Sahel is one such area. That is why I outlined the preceding facts. That is also why the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which combines the security and development approaches, seems to us to be the framework through which those problems must be addressed and, if possible, solved.

The dual approach of security and development was — very opportunely — taken up at the regional level with the establishment of the Group of Five (G-5) Sahel. The Executive Directorate has spared no effort in promoting the regional cooperation necessary in the fight against terrorism was determined to support the initiative, whereby the G-5 Sahel countries decided to work together to fight desertification, poor governance, terrorism and organized time. Moreover, my team is preparing to work with UNODC in operationalizing the security cooperation framework just established by the G-5 Sahel.

I believe more than ever that improved coordination in that area requires a decisive response to terrorism. It is also important to highlight the significant progress made in the Sahel region to address legislative and judicial matters involving terrorism, particularly the establishment of specialized training centres for magistrates. Nevertheless, the number of terrorism cases prosecuted remains low, leading to a lack of citizen confidence, which tends to exacerbate the effects of climate change. A high number of suspects remain in detention. Impunity engenders terrorism and must be ended.

I cannot reiterate enough that cooperation among countries in the region is crucial, but international cooperation, especially in criminal matters is critical, because terrorism and the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters are, by definition, criminal phenomena that are transnational par excellence. They also have an impact on natural resources. To ensure effective international cooperation, information-sharing must be strengthened among the various services involved in the combat against terrorism, and police cooperation must be strengthened in the Sahel through the G-5 by pooling resources in the area of criminal investigations, strengthening cooperation between public prosecutors and making magistrates aware of what is at stake in terms of such cooperation. To that end, I will be in Cotonou next week for a meeting with the leaders of the judicial bodies of the region and its surroundings. With French in common, we will meet on those issues, with the Sahel first and foremost in mind.

However, we must not forget the key role played by the international counter-terrorism instruments. They have precisely defined the vast majority of terrorism acts at the international level, thanks to our 19 conventions and protocols and the Council's resolutions, especially resolutions 1373 (2001) and 2178 (2014). It is critical for States to reform their legislation as soon as possible in order to criminalize the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters and participation in terrorist acts abroad, strengthen investigations and legal tools and the system for gathering evidence.

Concerning dialogue, we have talked about its criminal aspects, but I think that dialogue is also important for States of the region. Dialogue and partnerships need in particular to be bolstered within all segments of civil society so as to make it clear that terrorism must be distinguished from all other areas of society and that terrorists must be clearly distinguished from everybody else. Tribal and religious leaders must play a significant role in that particular context.

Additionally, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation in the region to allow those countries to fully shoulder their responsibility in protecting the people in emerging conflicts. They need to know how to settle emerging conflicts, render justice, provide basic services such as education and health care throughout the entire territory, and promote a culture of peace and tolerance. There is an urgent need to develop communications and awareness-raising strategies to address the threat among those worst off and in the rural areas. That is the only way to successfully combat the ideology of terrorist groups and put an end to their recruitment activities.

Along with security stratgies. the States of the region must therefore establish prevention strategies aimed at tackling the root causes of terrorism. Climate change and mitigation measures should be considered in terms of such strategies. The support of the international community is crucial in that sense, including United Nations European Union programmes and, as the Special Representative so eloquently noted, global leadership.

I would like to state that the Executive Directorate stands ready to assist the Council and the Counter-Terrorism Committee in providing necessary assistance to the countries of the Sahel with a view to establishing an integrated counter-terrorism strategy. On that solid basis, we can work with other United Nations agencies, in particular the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), which I recall is made up of 38 United Nations bodies and is therefore an important technical cooperation entity. It is headed by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Feltman. Of course we work closely together, I am pleased to say, and with the Office that supports the work of the CTITF. We will inform it as soon as possible of those efforts and possible joint tasks if the Council and the Counter-Terrorism Committee deem it useful.

The Executive Directorate is also ready, if the Council deems it necessary, to further explore cause-and-effect links between climate change and terrorism and, in line with resolution 2129 (2013), to study in greater depth and with the help of more than 30 research institutes and universities the possible correlation between terrorism and climate change. I would also be pleased to include that topic as part of our programme of work.

Finally, allow me to quote Albert Camus, whose reflection in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1957 seems especially relevant and topical in the context of our work today:

> "Each generation undoubtedly considers that it is destined to change the world. My generation knows, nonetheless, that it will not do so. But perhaps its task is greater; it must prevent the world from falling apart."

I thank Council members for their attention and for their confidence in me reflected in their request that I brief them on this matter today.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Laborde for his briefing.

I give the floor to Ms. Monique Barbut.

Ms. Barbut (*spoke in French*): I am grateful to you, Ambassador Aboulatta, President of the Security Council, and your Spanish counterpart, Ambassador Oyarzun Marchesi, for taking the important initiative and inviting me to participate in the discussion on the Sahel region.

The Scottish-born inventor, Alexander Graham Bell, said with respect to trying to crack a difficult problem, "Sometimes we stare so long at a door that is closing that we see too late the one that is open" . Likewise, it is true that the opportunity for coordinated action in the Sahel appears to be closing quickly.

The enormous and pressing challenges make future security scenarios seem bleak. With annual population growth rates of up to nearly 4 per cent, the population is increasing beyond the region's capacity to handle it, which will have massive consequences on the region's socioeconomic development and political stability. How will we provide enough food, energy, water, income and economic opportunity for the ballooning populations?

The region's gross domestic product per capita is already very low; over 40 per cent of the population lives on less than $1.25 a day. For the bulk of the population, life is tough and will get tougher. It is a breeding ground for broken dreams, crime, radicalization and conflict. Most of the people — up to 80 per cent — currently rely on the natural resource base for survival. They eke out a living on land that provides them with everything — food, employment and medicine. Climate change will promote increased desertification, with potentially devastating consequences.

According to some predictions, today poor land management coupled with climate change could reduce agricultural production by 13 per cent in Burkina Faso and by almost 50 per cent in the Sudan. In the Sahel, 85 per cent of the land is already degraded to a certain extent. It is a vicious circle. Today, just when more land is needed, less land and consequently less water will be available.

Land is closely linked to community identity, history and culture, of course. Today, the geopolitics of the Sahel are influenced by tensions over land and water shortages that can be easily manipulated in the service of political interests and can quickly spiral out of control. Thanks to bad governance, poverty and easy access to firearms, situations can quickly turn violent, as in the case of Darfur, where it is estimated that almost 300,000 people have died since 2003. That is clearly happening again in areas around Lake Chad and the Niger, where migration is increasing the pressure on transit and target regions. As has been noted, Lake Chad is a lifeline for at least 25 million people in four countries — Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. Tensions around natural resources, especially access to land and water, are increasing. For example, the waters of Lake Chad, which support more than 300 ethnic groups, have shrunk by 90 per cent since the 1960s. It is therefore no coincidence that the Lake Chad region is the cradle of Boko Haram and the home base for Al-Qaida in the Maghreb.

In April, I travelled to Agadez and Dirkou, two cities in the North of the Niger. Until recently, they were major tourist attractions and centres of commerce. They are now the principal transit points for migrants, through which between 150,000 and 200,000 people pass every year. There is little infrastructure to speak of. The illegal trafficking of migrants and migration-related activities are the towns' only viable economic activity. People returning from Libya tell terrible stories of their experiences farther along the route. But there are few alternatives. The question is, how can we all tolerate so much misery and despair concentrated in one place?

Land desertification and degradation are pulling the rug out from under millions of people. Those who cannot leave have a deep feeling of despair. This is creating conditions of desperation for a population that is unemployed, poor and vulnerable, including as many as 41 million young people in the Sahel region alone. More generally, and according to a recent study by the British Ministry of Defence, by 2035, almost 60 million people will have migrated to North Africa and Europe as a result of the desertification of sub-Saharan Africa. In that regard, I should point out that according to an International Organization for Migration census, 100 per cent of the illegal migrants entering Europe come from arid areas. That should make us ask ourselves some questions. All the evidence points to the fact that in the past few years we have crossed a watershed on the path towards political instability, economic migration and inter-ethnic conflict.

But to return to Alexander Graham Bell, there are open doors if we focus on the fundamentals. Given the major importance of agriculture and productive land for generating jobs and income in sub-Saharan Africa, our efforts to achieve stability and peace must focus more on land management. Natural resources cannot be a last-minute afterthought tacked on to our security strategy. We know that rural migrants generally prefer to live close to their homes. Before they get as far as leaving their own countries, more than half of all migrants move within their countries or to other neighbours. Migration to other continents is often a last resort. It means a long, hard journey under desperate conditions. Many would stay or return home if they could. Those now being repatriated from Mediterranean shores will have to cope once again with various challenges — a lack of social support networks, constant droughts and competition for access to resources between nomadic and settled

peoples. They need better and more proactive support if we are to avoid creating more instability.

All the dividends of a lasting peace in the region should involve the sustainable use of land and water. Where aid is concerned, priority should be given to developing employment and income-producing economic opportunities in rural areas. The implementation of initiatives such as the Great Green Wall and the Lake Chad Initiative is expanding, but it should be happening more quickly. In order to scale them up, we must help to get the young men and women of the Sahel working again. We should invest in decent jobs based on rehabilitation of the land in every village and community on the front lines of desertification. We estimate that an average of 5,000 villages per country is needed to kick-start a new economy and a virtuous circle. In the Sahel region, rehabilitation and sustainable management of one hectare of land costs about $250 and requires nothing apart from labour. That comes to less than $3,000 per job, per year, compared with, for example, the cost associated with paying for a migrant to stay in a camp in Italy, which is about $15,000 a year.

That land management-based approach has multiple advantages. It would be hugely beneficial to economic growth and income generation and would strengthen the resilience of communities that are vulnerable to climate change, improve food and water security and stabilize much of the region. We are not claiming that it is a magic bullet, but it would definitely be cheaper and more effective than investing in walls, wars and relief. It could at least begin to mitigate the political grievances, poverty and marginalization that are driving frustrated young Africans to take radical action. It should at the very least be part of our efforts to prevent conflict and consolidate peace. It is an open door, and it is up to us to walk through it.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Barbut for her statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Ibrahim.

Ms. Ibrahim (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to speak to the Security Council today. I come from the Mbororo community, a nomadic and semi-nomadic people who live around Lake Chad, where I grew up. Climate change and desertification have become everyday issues for us, affecting stability and insecurity in the Sahel, because their impact is socioeconomic as well as environmental. Climate change has a direct effect on the natural resources that our countries' economies depend on, and that includes our economy. As we know, more than 70 per cent of the population of the Sahel is rural, depending directly for a living on agriculture and herding, which occupy large tracts of land and sustain millions of people. Even while many people in rural areas are leaving them to live in cities, the rural population is growing. In Chad, where I come from, agriculture constitutes more than 50 per cent of the country's wealth.

The effects of climate change on agriculture are numerous. Natural disasters, particularly drought and a lack of water, have a catastrophic impact on our agricultural resources. Our soil is impoverished, partly because periods of drought and flooding come in rapid succession, which leads to soil erosion and destruction and the loss of biodiversity. When I was young — of course, I am still young — we had a number of resources, in the form of grasses and animal and vegetable species, that have now disappeared forever. Climate change piles poverty on top of poverty every day. That has a direct impact on security because the depletion of resources reinforces conflicts among communities. I know what I am talking about.

With regard to conflicts over water resources, which have been greatly depleted around Lake Chad — as other briefers have already mentioned — land has been appropriated. For the small amount of fertile land that remains, the law of the most powerful applies. Small-scale farmers and ranchers do not have access. Access to sources of water is becoming very difficult because one must cross fields and fight to survive. Concerning conflicts between nomadic herders and farmers resulting from access to land, instead of working together as they once did, using the herds to fertilize the fields for their cultivation, everything has changed. With the shifting of the rainy seasons, the fields are occupied by the strident conflicts over nothing other than basic resources. And as we all know in the Sahel, that is a major problem for our States.

With regard to conflicts tied to migration, of which we have already spoken, poverty, intensified by climate change, is driving men and women to leave rural areas for large cities, sometimes temporarily or seasonally, during the dry season, to send money back home. Consequently, they leave millions of women and children at home, who must fight all alone to find food and survive. Others leave for longer periods of time and try to cross the seas in order to reach Europe. For them, it is not a matter of choice. They are forced to do it.

With regard to conflicts related to extremism — as we heard from the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Director — in the Lake Chad Basin, which has long liver under the threat of Boko Haram, we know how that works. Men have no choice, even though there are soldiers who are fighting against the members of that group. But we see their numbers growing every day, along with the recruitment of young people. Yet we wonder why it is easy to recruit them when they are being killed every day. They offer sums of money — $50, for example — that the potential recruit has not seen for the entire year. He is offered $500 to join, and it becomes very easy for him to make up his mind, because for a man in Africa, and especially in the Sahel, his dignity is defined by providing for his family. If he cannot provide for his family's basic needs, his dignity is left to the highest bidder, while he must assume that responsibility. He is ready to do anything amd everything. He has no choice but to sign up. We all are familiar with those threats, the Security Council must play a significant role in countering them. We know already the role that it is playing in attenuating existing conflicts, but the prevention of those acute conflicts is very important and urgent.

We also very well know that today climate change and desertification are playing key roles in the Sahel. Indeed, we must accelerate the implementation of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. That, however, is a specific mechanism that is charged with carrying it out. We also know that those rural populations are becoming increasingly vulnerable and need to adapt. They therefore need the most urgent solutions possible and must not depend on agreements that will take years to implement, for it is a matter of survival for those populations.

As we very well know, women are at forefront of the impact of all those consequences. And as for the children who will grow up without an education or future, their destiny is to follow the roads that have been paved for them in bad faith. We must avoid that and come up with the necessary measures and solutions for those people. In the simplest terms, the question is not only how to eradicate poverty, but also how to carve out a better life for them. They all want to be farmers or herders and continue to survive, but that is no no easy thing.

Today, the international community must find solutions to those crises, which are the only means to offer a future and hope to rural communities. In my community, the people do not wish to emigrate or change their way of life, but their environment is changing despite themselves and they have no control over it. We must therefore strengthen actions allowing them to preserve their way of life and culture by supporting pastoralism and family farming. We welcome the major projects in urban areas, but the small-scales projects designed to allow small communities to stay where they are even better. It is also by providing young people with prospects for the future in their communities that we will prevent them from succumbing to the pressures of terrorist groups or leaving their land for another.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Ibrahim for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I want to first express my profound gratitude to you, Sir, and my colleague from Spain and your delegations for taking the initiative of organizing this very important meeting. Our exchange today on the topic of peace and security in Africa and challenges in the Sahel region are in line with the briefing that the Department of Political Affairs provided us on 22 March.

The Sahel region is the focal point of the cumulative negative impact of several scourges, as evidenced by the diverse perspectives of the briefers whom we have just heard, and whom I would like to warmly thank in the name of the Senegalese delegation for having shed a raw light on our discussion. The Sahel region could and should serve as a model for experimentation and integrated implementation of the major recommendations of the global processes that the international community conducted from 2015 and 2016: the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1), the Paris Agreement on climate change — which has been referred to — the World Humanitarian Summit that was just held in Istanbul, and preparations for third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, or Habitat III, which will take place in Quito in October.

In recent years, the types and number of criminal activities perpetrated in the Sahel region have continued to increase with the regular change of locations and

targets, demonstrating once again the level of flexibility and capacity of adaptability of the terrorist groups operating in the region, including Boko Haram, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest and Ansar el-Dine, among others. The humanitarian consequences of those terrorist attacks are tragic, including approximately 2.8 million displaced persons, 20 million affected, and 4.5 million experiencing humanitarian insecurity, including children, and insecurity in general.

As Mr. Laborde eloquently demonstrated, there is undoubtedly an inextricable link between the scourges of terrorism, transnational organized crime and trafficking of all kinds that fundamentally undermines the security and stability of the region. The nature of that link therefore demands a holistic approach that takes into consideration the political, security, ideological and humanitarian aspects of that fight. In other words, we can win this fight only through a multisectoral, multidimensional and interregional approach that incorporates West Africa, the Sahel, Central Africa and the entire Sahelo-Saharan region and addresses the three dimensions of prevention, repression and protection. In this fight, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, which is now in operation, needs to assume a full role. We have just hear from its Head, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ibn Chambas. We also believe it important to ensure better cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, particularly through the African Peace and Security Architecture.

It is also important to speed up the operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force for the fight against Boko Haram. That group undoubtedly poses one of the greatest challenges to peace and security in the region, where it acts with terrible cruelty. In order to curb the terrorist threat, the second session of the Regional Security Summit was held on 14 May in Abuja, with the aim of taking stock of the strategies and actions undertaken by the countries of the region and their partners to fight terrorism in the Sahel. In a nutshell, we sought to define an action plan to eradicate the root causes of terrorism by focusing on investments for development in the affected regions and delivery of the social needs of the most vulnerable, in particular young people, but also women, as Ms. Ibrahim mentioned, through employment, training and education.

When he spoke at that meeting in Abuja, President Macky Sall of Senegal said that "the fight against terrorism may be in vain if the funding sources of this scourge are not cut off". He called for a focus on education, training and employment, as well as on the creation of income-generating activities in order to push back ignorance and provide young people the reasons and the means to hope. President Macky Sall added:

> "It is in ignorance, poverty and social exclusion that terrorism finds fertile ground for its development by the indoctrination of some and the exploitation of others".

He concluded that otherwise we would simply be treating the symptoms and not the malady.

The challenges to peace and security in the Sahel region are multiple, but they are not unknown; numerous studies have identified them. As a country of the region, Senegal naturally faces such challenges and constraints, some of which I would wish to recall. Over and beyond the threats I noted earlier, I would point to such phenomena as climate change, with its corollaries drought, desertification, soil degradation, soil salinization and, of course, the increasing scarcity of and problems in maintaining water resources. These diverse factors seriously hinder the development and well-being of communities, making them vulnerable to various scammers who exploit their misery to satisfy their vile purposes.

To those elements, we can also add the issue of access to property and the endemic problems of locusts and grain-eating birds, all of which have a negative impact on crops, food security and already modest incomes. Cornered by persistent poverty, desperate young people in these localities have no alternative than to change their way of life, generating the phenomenon of rural exodus that increases pressure on towns confronted with overcrowding and poverty.

For others, there is a an even more perilous adventure of clandestine migration towards an El Dorado that does not exist. This exercise often consists of facing the sea aboard vessels of dubious reliability or leaving home for the great desert, abandoning in both cases their fates to the hands of smugglers who have few qualms about exploiting their vulnerability.

On a slightly different note, conflicts and tensions require entire families to leave their homes to crowd into camps for refugee camps or internally displaced persons. The challenges to peace and security in the Sahel region are numerous, but we have a good part of the

solution, notably through the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which contains solutions to the well-defined problems that the region still faces. For example, I would cite the promotion of programmes to mitigate and adapt to climate change and the focus on building long-term resilience in the region.

A German research organization, the Planck Institute for Meteorology, has stated that by the year 2050, at the current pace of climate change, if nothing is done, all the northern region of the African continent will become uninhabitable for human beings. We can all imagine all the consequences if that were to happen for both the North and the South of Africa. The German research Max Planck Institute predicts that if nothing is done, at the current pace of climate change, by 2050 the entire northern part of the African continent will be inhabitable for the human species. We can all imagine the many consequences for northern and southern Africa.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I thank our four briefers today for their statements, which I believe provide a very clear view of the complexity of the Sahel. I would also like to thank those who will speak following the members of the Council.

The Sahel has on many occasions been defined, and the phrase is very familiar to us in New York, as the ground zero of global warming. In recent years, far from an improving situation, the region has continued to face a consistent increase in temperature, persistent droughts and other extreme climate phenomena such as torrential rains. Every month, the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration announces that the temperature of the Earth has hit a new historic record — a record that always seems to exceed those of previous months. The existing projections for the Sahel region are truly alarming. At the same time, every year, thousands of hectares of arable land are lost and an ever-growing population has less and less land to farm. That formula will clearly lead to instability. Such instability has a number of root causes, ranging from extreme poverty to the fragility of State infrastructures and including violent extremism and the proliferation of illicit trafficking and terrorist groups.

The day-to-day lives of those who inhabit the Sahel region was clearly described to us by a very young — still young — lady, Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim. We know that the final solution to the challenge of climate change is not in the hands of the Security Council, nor do we claim it to be. However, that cannot be used as an excuse for the Council to ignore that reality in exercising its primary responsibility for peacekeeping and international security. Climate change is already changing the rules of the game, and to ignore the truth will just lead us to failure. That is the exact purpose of this meeting, which I increasingly value. This initiative was undertaken by us together with the Egyptian presidency, to whom we express our full gratitude for its support and for bringing this issue to safe harbour.

We proposed this meeting with three objectives in mind: first, to ensure that the commitments undertaken by the Council would not remain dead letter; secondly, to provide necessary information so that the Council can efficiently fulfil its preventative function; and, thirdly, to address the crisis in the Sahel from a holistic point of view, as the Ambassador of Senegal pointed out so well. I would like to refer briefly to each of these objectives.

With regard to fulfilling the commitments undertaken by the Council, it is important to point out that this meeting of the Council is a continuation of the path already undertaken by the United Kingdom a decade ago, which was too long ago, and it also fulfils the commitments undertaken by presidential statement S/PRST/2011/15 in 2011, under the initiative of Germany. More recently, in 2015 presidential statement S/PRST/2015/24 reaffirmed the Council's commitment to addressing the challenges for security in the Sahel, which are intrinsically related to the adverse consequences of climate change in the region. Those commitments, which we agreed to in this very Chamber, cannot simply remain declarations of intentions.

With regard to the Council's preventative function, the intention is to provide the Security Council with relevant information so it can have an overview of the situation that would make it possible to accurately diagnosis and define solutions that are more effective. In other words, the idea is to better prepare it to carry out its prevention role. Therefore, the presentations made by a number of different speakers today, who I would like to thank again for their brilliant briefings, have shown us the interrelationship between the exacerbation of desertification, as a maximum expression of the effects of climate change in this region, and security in the Sahel.

Finally, we want to ensure that an integrated and coordinated approach, which we so often clamour for in addressing a complex crisis, such as that in the Sahel, is adopted. The region resides between three great threats to security: the situation Libya; the insecurity in Mali, where the peace process is progressing too slowly; and the terrorist actions of Boko Haram in the north-east of Nigeria and in the Lake Chad Basin. These crises are fuelled by a number of factors, but there is not a single one that alone would result in a future of violence and instability in the region. It is the sum of many circumstances that is leading the Sahel from the path of peace, stability and growth. Therefore, I want to make a series of three proposals for action.

First, the Security Council needs to continue to receive information and fulfil the commitment it undertook in 2011 to analyse the different factors that, like climate change, impact peace and security in fragile regions. Having appropriate information on how these issues pose a challenge to stability in the Sahel will strengthen the Council's preventative function. In that regard, I recall the myriad debates we have held on the preventative function of the Council. Climate change will therefore become one more early-warning factor in order to be able to take action effectively when it comes time to anticipating tensions. Humanitarian crises due to food insecurity, water insecurity, massive displacement of people and uncontrolled migratory flows can be anticipated and we can implement the appropriate measures. The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Ms. Monique Barbut, provided us with an outstanding briefing on this.

Secondly, the Council needs to ensure that the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel pay due attention to the issues raised today, especially the destabilizing role played by climate change in the region. In order to do this in an orderly manner, it is necessary to listen to and address the needs put forth by the Sahel countries that are with us today. We have recently seen how these countries are putting in place a whole series of inter-State cooperation structures, which are trying to establish a connection, which we see very clearly, between security and development.

Finally, as was also brilliantly suggested by my friend, the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Jean-Paul Laborde, we think it is a very good idea for the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate to analyse the impact of climate change and look at whether or not the effects of climate change exacerbate the fragility of specific peoples and make them more vulnerable to violent extremism and terrorist recruitment. Mr. Laborde has our full support in that task.

The fact that we are holding this meeting today — at which the challenges, including climate change, of a region on the Council's agenda are being considered from an integrated approach — is itself a great step forward, but we must continue working along these lines, because climate change is part of our present and it will no doubt define our future.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting and to thank the briefers for their presentations.

The current situation in the Sahel region has been stable in general, but the spread of terrorism and serious transnational organized crime has made the security situation fragile. The region also faces multiple challenges, including uneven development. The international community should increase its input and take an integrative approach to addressing these challenges.

First, we should actively promote the settlement of regional hotspot issues. Mitigating regional hotspot issues and realizing peace and national reconciliation constitute the basis for peace and stability in the Sahel region. The international community should, on the basis of the respect for the sovereignty of the country concerned, support the Malian parties in the comprehensive implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation with a view to improving the security situation, advancing national reconciliation and promoting the peace process. The international community should pay attention to the spillover effect of external problems, such as the Libya crisis, on the Sahel region and refuse the negative impact of such factors.

Secondly, we should comprehensively advance counter-terrorism cooperation in the region. The international community should pay attention to the damage caused by terrorist activities to the stability and security of the region and increase counter-terrorism efforts in the region. We should support the States of the region in their counter-terrorism endeavour with a focus on comprehensively strengthening capacity-building

in the security area in connection with their counter-terrorism needs. The relevant United Nations counter-terrorism organs should increase their coordination and provide targeted training and technical assistance so as to comprehensively increase the ability of the countries of the region to counter terrorism and eliminate terrorist threats.

Thirdly, we should focus on the problem of underdevelopment in the region. The countries of the region should take the opportunity offered by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) to formulate development strategies suited to their specific conditions. The international community and international financial institutions should increase their development assistance and help the countries of the region enhance their capacity for development. The relevant United Nations organizations should fully leverage their advantages and study in-depth the development needs of the countries of the region. They should promote the international community in providing targeted assistance and speed up the economic and social development of the countries of the region.

Fourthly, we should promote synergy in addressing the questions facing the Sahel region. Regional organizations, such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Group of Five Sahel, are familiar with the conditions of the countries of the region and enjoy a unique advantage in efforts to address these problems. The United Nations should strengthen coordination with these organizations and organically integrate national strategies, regional strategies and the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel to coordinate resources and form synergies in coordinating with the relevant organs in the West African region. The United Nations should listen to and heed the views of regional States and ensure a rational allocation of resources so that the Organization can more effectively respond to the challenges.

China and Africa belong to a community of common destiny and interest. Strengthening unity and cooperation with African countries has always been an important cornerstone of our foreign policy. In September last year, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held a summit in Johannesburg and decided to elevate its relationship to that of a partnership of strategic cooperation. We are willing to work with African countries to implement the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit and take practical actions to benefit African countries, including the Sahel countries, with a view to realizing peace, stability and prosperity on and the development of the African continent.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I wish to thank all of our briefers. We are particularly grateful to the Egyptian presidency and to Spain for convening a meeting on the threats posed to the Sahel region by climate change and terrorism. We, like those two delegations and others in the Chamber, are really concerned by the possible adverse effect that climate change could have on the peace and security of what is already a very fragile region. Add climate change to the increasing threat posed by terrorism, and you see the scale of the challenge facing these countries.

The Sahel is one of the most vulnerable regions in the world to climate change. With a 2 per cent temperature rise, scientists forecast that yields of millet and sorghum could fall by a quarter by 2018, and 80 per cent in Burkina Faso and Niger. Maize and rice yields could also fall. This is not about productivity. This is about stopping children from going hungry and stopping people from slipping back into extreme poverty. With one in nine people already going hungry across the world, we cannot afford to let it become two in nine. Sadly, that risk is becoming a reality, as our briefers set out very clearly. Since the turn of the last century, temperatures in the Sahel have already risen by 1.3 degrees Centrigrade, and rainfall has already decreased by up to 30 per cent. This has led to desertification and reduced organic soil matter. The effects of extreme weather patterns, such as El Niño, continue to test the resilience of countries in the Sahel.

As Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim has just set out for us, without access to diverse and productive livelihoods and, crucially, livelihoods that are adapted to climate change, the young people in and of the Sahel will become increasingly disenfranchised and increasingly hungry. They will get even poorer and they will become even more vulnerable to extremist messaging.

The Niger has Africa's second-highest rate of population growth and is ranked at the bottom of the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Index*. Competition over scarce resources and employment opportunities will increase, and long-term tensions between pastoralists and farmers will be exacerbated. The call of extremism will thrive in these conditions. That is why there needs to be a holistic and coordinated response from the international community

that focuses on long-term factors. We welcome the African Union Peace and Security Council's explicit acknowledgment of the link between climate change and peace and security in March. The Council, as Spain has already said, has also recognized that link and must continue to focus on it as a key part of its conflict-prevention role.

The United Nations has a critical part to play in supporting the countries of the region in facing up to these challenges. The United Nations, at the request of the Council, has developed an integrated strategy for the Sahel, which has at its heart building resilience against threats such as climate change and terrorism. It now also has a more effective structure in place for implementing that strategy, following the merger of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel.

The United Kingdom will play its part. This year we will provide $26 million to the Sahel region to build resilience to extreme climate events. By 2017 that figure will be $79 million. Our projects are creating new coalitions for civil society, of the private sector, Government, media, universities and meteorological offices, to build community resilience and strengthen national and international planning. This year, the United Kingdom is also providing $9 million to the Sahel region for a social protection programme. This programme will build stronger social systems that are able to respond to shocks and stresses, including climate change. By 2018, we will have provided $70 million through this programme.

We all recognize the significant threat terrorism and organized crime pose to the Sahel. Through tackling terrorism and insecurity in a holistic manner, by addressing the root causes, including the effects of climate change, we can help those who find themselves drawn to extremist groups. The United Kingdom supports the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, and we support the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and efforts through other actors, including the European Union, to that end. However, collective and coordinated action from the countries of the region will also be needed to combat terrorism. The efforts of the Group of Five Sahel — Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger — to increase their cooperation and tackle insecurity are a very welcome step forward. It is only through regional ownership and political engagement with international support that we will be able to overcome these challenges and ensure a brighter future for the people of the Sahel.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking the delegations of Egypt and Spain for convening this meeting. I would like to also express my gratitude for the timely distribution of the context note on the destabilizing effects that climate change can have when they further exacerbate the traditional causes of conflict in the Sahel. I would also like to express my gratitude to Mr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, Ms. Monique Barbut, Mr. Jean-Paul Laborde, Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Mr. Pierre Buyoya and Mr. Angel Losada for their briefings.

Having perused the aforementioned context note, Uruguay is convinced that the international community, including the United Nations system, needs to focus its efforts on addressing the structural causes of poverty and inequity. It should do so through adequate mechanisms, such as cooperation, official development assistance, access to resources and the transfer of technology for adapting to climate change. However, it should not take a security approach, but rather one that addresses the underlying causes, understanding that climate change can pose a further challenge to the stability of societies and international security. There is no easy answer. That is why we must continue with our efforts in the context of the Climate Change Convention, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, among others, and fulfil the commitments made.

An isolated approach positing a single possible cause of a conflict linked to socioeconomic and environmental factors might provide us with a partial and even distorted view or understanding of the dynamics that might lead a society to conflict. Adequate and fluid cooperation among the various bodies, under the terms set forth by the Charter of the United Nations, the programmes of the Organization and specialized bodies, is necessary in order to address factors that might affect security, including the extreme consequences of climate change. That does not mean that the topic of climate change needs to be on the agenda of the Security Council. We do not believe that would be relevant.

In any event, we should not underestimate the importance that the United Nations should attach to helping to prevent conflicts in the most vulnerable areas

through its peacebuilding activities and projects and programmes implemented by various United Nations agencies, the goal of which is to provide an environment that is more suitable to human development.

Uruguay is cognizant of the fact that the security situation in the Sahel deserves the special attention of the Council, especially given the terrorist activities being developed there, as well as the significant trafficking of drugs and weapons in that vast region, where many areas lie beyond effective State control. Periodically in the north of Mali, terrorist, criminal and extremist activities advance despite the progress achieved after the signing of the Peace Agreement. The civilian populations in the north continue to face a series of difficulties in accessing State institutions, and are unable to enjoy the peace dividends that stem from the agreement.

In the meantime, the number of displaced persons continues to grow, while terrorist attacks — more than 200 of which have been perpetrated since early 2015 — are increasingly effective and sophisticated and claim an ever-larger number of victims. United Nations forces on the ground have been the targets of more than 40 per cent of such attacks, against which they have trouble defending themselves given their asymmetric nature and the scarce resources and personnel available to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. In that regard, the strategic review to be formally presented next week is not just relevant but indeed urgent.

In order to address the regional problem, we need tailor-made campaigns. That is why we applaud such initiatives as the Group of Five Sahel, which has become an institutional framework for coordinating and overseeing regional cooperation. We commend the initiative of the Lake Chad Basin countries in establishing the Multinational Joint Task Force to address the problem of Boko Haram. We also appreciate the recent restructuring of the United Nations Office for West Africa and hope that it will provide us with a better overview of the situation in the Sahel and of the progress made in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which is relevant to a number of countries that are not within the region itself.

The 4.5 million displaced persons in the Sahel will continue to grow in number due to political instability in Libya and the terrorist threat in the region, including Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar el-Dine, Boko Haram, and the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest, to mention just a few. All of this is made possible by the porous borders and lack of State control. The best way to address it is by building the institutional capacities of the States of the region, providing education, increasing the capacities of Government security forces, and providing greater access to justice and health-care centres.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary Barbut, Executive Director Laborde and Ms. Ibrahim for their briefings today. I should also like to give a special thanks to Spain and Egypt for drawing the Security Council's attention to the urgent need to focus on the effects of the changing climate on security in the Sahel region.

Some Council members have pushed back on the appropriateness of having this discussion in this forum. Skepticism about the relationship between climate change and security is not new, but skepticism does not make the facts any less serious or urgent. Climate change is not just about whether glaciers remain majestic or polar bears survive. Climate change is an aggravating factor, among other political, socioeconomic and security considerations, that exacerbates underlying tensions, undermines governance, contributes to resource conflicts and negatively impacts development.

As Secretary of State John Kerry said last year, this is not about Bambi. This is about people and it is about poverty. While no conflict is caused solely by climate, to ignore the interplay between security and climate change — and there are few places where that interplay is felt more acutely than the Sahel — is to ignore fundamental realities. From Mauritania and Mali to the Lake Chad Basin to the Horn of Africa, we see the complex challenges exacerbated by climate change on peace, stability and security. Unpredictable rainfall, higher temperatures, frequent droughts and natural disasters in the Sahel have augmented existing destabilizing pressures from terrorism to trafficking, and exacerbated the problems of population displacement and weak governance. Put simply, climate change is indeed a threat multiplier.

The Boko Haram crisis in the Lake Chad Basin region starkly illustrates the interplay between climate change and security. According to a recent World Food Programme study, over the past half-century Lake Chad has receded drastically due to various environmental

pressures, which has increased competition and conflict over already scarce resources, such as arable land and water, and degraded regional food security and quality of life.

Simultaneously, Boko Haram's barbaric terrorist campaign, now entering its seventh year, has greatly exacerbated the existing food insecurity faced by the population of the Lake Chad Basin region. The Boko Haram crisis has disrupted farming and trade and cut off communities from the means they require to subsist and to survive. Today, an estimated 4.2 million people are in need of emergency food assistance in the Lake Chad Basin region and 2.6 million are displaced within Nigeria and the neighbouring countries. Meanwhile, this humanitarian crisis has been but a blip on the screen of the international community, drawing only sporadic attention and a woefully insufficient response. Indeed, Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien this week referred to the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin region, where poverty and desertification have been compounded by Boko Haram violence, as the world's "most neglected, underreported, underfunded and least addressed".

Military intelligence and law enforcement that protect human rights norms are vital to combating terrorism. In that regard, we applaud the important territorial advances made by the Governments of Nigeria, Chad, the Niger and Cameroon to roll back some of Boko Haram's safe havens in the Lake Chad Basin region. However, only a truly comprehensive strategy that mobilizes a broad range of stakeholders, including development and humanitarian actors, can address the conditions conducive to terrorism and the scars left in its wake. The United States is encouraged that, under Nigeria President Buhari's leadership, last week's Regional Security Summit committed to carrying out a sustained, comprehensive approach against Boko Haram that couples rights-respecting security operations with civilian efforts to restore stability and promote governance and economic development to break the cycle of violence in all countries where Boko Haram is active.

The United Nations system, including the Special Representatives for West Africa and the Sahel and Central Africa, should continue to assist the Lake Chad Basin region to implement such a comprehensive strategy. In addition, the United Nations needs to mainstream preventing violent extremism and counter-terrorism issues throughout its core work on peace and security and sustainable development so that it can help Member States, including in the broader Sahel region, to deliver in those crucial areas. We also encourage the United Nations system and its partners to make further progress towards the effective implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which was first endorsed by the Council in 2013 and should now be re-evaluated and updated so that it can better assist Governments of the region to mitigate against compound threats, including climate change.

Let us be clear. No one is suggesting that Boko Haram was caused by climate change. It most certainly was not. But the devastation wrought by environmental degradation and challenges like severe drought and the scarcity of resources that come along with it can spark a kind of poverty and political volatility that are the oxygen of discontent and drivers of instability, if left unchecked. Recognizing that reality does not require us to be any less relentless in our pursuit of terrorists like Boko Haram or Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb. We will not be. It just allows us to be more effective in doing so.

As our discussion here today illustrates, complex and interrrelated governance, security and humanitarian challenges, exacerbated by the effects of climate change across the Sahel region, require urgent and fresh thinking and action. We encourage the leaders of the Sahel to continue to deepen their cooperation, including through the Group of Five Sahel and the Nouakchott Process, by coming to agreement on a shared vision of the region's threats and the efforts needed to address them, including improving the sustainable management of natural resources and effective, inclusive governance that both combats terrorism and addresses the conditions conducive to it.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation for the initiative of Egypt and and Spain in convening this briefing. Allow me also to join others in thanking all of the four briefers.

(*spoke in French*)

I should like in particular to thank Ms. Hindour Oumarou Ibrahim for having conveyed the voice of the people of her region directly to the Security Council.

(*spoke in English*)

Japan looks forward to the acceleration of the United Nations actions in the Sahel under the leadership

of Mr. Ibn Chambas as Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

The Sahel faces many major challenges today. Peace and security remain fragile. The spread of terrorism from the Sahel to the rest of West Africa is worrisome. I saw the reality with my own eyes in northern Mali, where, due to the absence of State authority, the local population has no choice but to coexist with terrorists and to depend on an informal economy.

Despite all the challenges, there remains hope. Some countries are becoming resilient to the threats. Building resilient societies in the Sahel is an achievable goal. The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) is a valuable tool to that end. One of the key elements overarching the UNISS strategic goals is the importance of institutional capacity-building, which Japan fully supports. Indeed, Japan's commitments to institution- and capacity-building in Africa, which were made at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD-V) have already been translated into concrete actions. That includes capacity-building support for some 2,000 people in the Sahel aimed at enhancing counter-terrorism capacity. That support was announced by Prime Minister Abe at the TICAD-V thematic session dedicated to the Sahel.

The role of the Group of Five Sahel (G-5 Sahel) in promoting the UNISS should also be commended. The G-5 Sahel has made efforts to foster regional capacities through the establishment of subregional training schools in the field of security and defence. We fully support such actions.

Countries that have more or less successfully implemented the UNISS, including through inclusive governance and social cohesion, show greater resilience to terrorism, organized crime, drought and other threats to peace and security. I was ambassador to some of those countries. In the case of Burkina Faso and Niger I was ambassador some time ago, and I witnessed those cases. In Burkina Faso local communities have been constructing more thane 1,400 reservoirs for irrigation but also in anticipation of future droughts. Their society is a model of people combining their efforts, not only to prepare for the worse, but also to reinforce the foundations of their livelihoods. In Niger, various ethnic communities are politically represented and integrated into the central Government, and that ensures effective and responsible governance throughout the country despite its vast territory and great diversity.

I believe there are two keys to creating societies that are resilient to threats. The first is ownership and the second is consideration of the local context. When Japan was implementing the technology-transfer project to counter desertification in Burkina Faso, we recognized the potential difficulty of ensuring sustainable maintenance and the practical difficulties of applying advanced technologies to local conditions. We drew two lessons from that experience. The first was that it is very important to make full use of traditional knowledge and customary procedures. The second was that in order to ensure ownership, decision-making must be promoted at the community level through the traditional system. The efforts of the United Nations and other international partners in the Sahel should be guided by the principles of ownership and consideration of the local context.

Ownership has been one of the core principles guiding the Japan-led multi-stakeholder TICAD process for more than two decades. This coming August the next TICAD will be held in Africa, at the summit level, for the first time in the African continent's history. We look forward to the active participation of countries from the Sahel region and the G-5 Sahel.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank the Egyptian presidency and Spain for having taken this initiative to convene this important and extremely timely debate. I also thank all the briefers for the excellent quality of their statements — Mr. Ibn Chambas, Mr. Laborde, Ms. Barbut and Ms. Ibrahim. The views that they shared with us are very helpful in guiding our work.

To a great extend I share what has already been said. I will limit my statement to three main ideas.

First, the challenges to the security and development of the Sahel are immense. The effects of climate change have particularly affected the region, and that at a time of strong demographic growth, especially as between 2015 and 2050 the population will increase from 85 million to more than 200 million inhabitants. That could be an asset, or it could be a major liability if the growth of the population is not accompanied by sufficient development, because that could produce tragedies — forced migration, political instability, insecurity and the temptation of extremism. The Sahel today therefore is at a crossroad, but there is no foregone conclusion if the Sahel countries and their partners come together to meet those challenges. Already, we

see in Mali how the mobilization of the international community can bear fruit in a situation that is much better today than in 2012.

My second thought concerns the strategy to adopt to meet the numerous challenges in the Sahel. Our approach can be effective only if it integrates that complexity. That means meeting the challenges in different areas. Here it is crucial to underscore the link made here today among climate, security and development. In the Sahel, clearly there are many problems. There is food insecurity linked to soil and land degradation, which is made worse by population growth and climate warming. In that framework, all initiatives need to be encouraged. The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel should be quickly implemented. We also welcome the streamlining of the prevention and crisis management plans in the framework of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

Furthermore, regional initiatives need to be promoted. The framework of the Group of Five Sahel (G-5 Sahel), as we have underscored on numerous occasions, today seems to be very pertinent in terms of meeting challenges. Here, I would like to mention the Great Green Wall for the Sahel and the Sahara Initiative and the sustainable development projects around Lake Chad. Over and beyond that, the work of the Economic Community of West African States and the Africa Union is also to be encouraged, as is the work of the European Union, which, as members are aware, is very committed to the Sahel.

Looking at a more global dimension, the universal integrated approach to development — which is that of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and the Paris Agreement — establishes a deadline. Its implementation, especially in the Sahel and in other large areas of vulnerability on the planet, is the major issue facing our generation. But we can change the situation in the Sahel only if we move forward determinedly and collectively with all the relevant stakeholders — the States, the United Nations, international financial institutions, civil society and businesses.

All things considered — and this will be my last point — I can confirm France's full support for the long term to meet those challenges of the Sahel. France has been involved in an unprecedented manner in terms of security to deal in the short term with the threat of terrorism and the instability that it engenders. Security in the Sahel region does not affect just the Sahel, because terrorism has also become globalized, as everyone is well aware. The French approach, with Operation Serval and then with Operation Barkhane, is based on a sustainable partnership with the armies of the Sahel with a view to making them more able to fight terrorism efficiently, in an autonomous manner and over the long term. I wish to renew, to our African and international partners, our full commitment to stand by their side in the fight against violent extremism.

Above and beyond the essential security measures, President François Hollande confirmed — at the summit on 1 December 2015 with the African Heads of State on the margins of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) — his commitment to mobilizing the donors and the entire international community to focus on Africa's three major priorities: energy sources, the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative, and restoring Lake Chad. The French Agency for Development and the French Global Environment Facility finance or co-finance numerous development projects. President Hollande announced on that occasion that France will donate $6 billion towards African energy needs by 2020, $2 billion of which is earmarked for renewable energy.

Finally, President Hollande announced a significant increase in official development assistance — €4 billion more, starting in 2020 — which will increase our aid from €8 billion to €12 billion, demonstrating France's exceptional commitment on behalf of the most poor and the most vulnerable.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, for his briefing. Likewise, we thank Ms. Monique Barbut and Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim for their briefings, as well as Mr. Jean-Paul Laborde, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

Last 25 November, the Security Council convened a meeting (see S/PV.7566) that related to the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. At that time, the security situation in the region was described as highly unstable. Transnational organized crime, trafficking in small arms and light weapons and narcotics and the emergence

of the scourge of terrorism have left a particular mark on the region, even amid major efforts by countries and subregional organizations through various initiatives for national and regional security, the value of which we acknowledge and encourage.

The grave political and military situations that have developed in Mali and Libya have been determining factors in defining security strategies to combat the presence and expansion of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Al Mourabitoun and Ansar Eddine, among others. Venezuela reiterates its concern to the Council over the impact of armed violence and increasing violent extremism and instability triggered by the military intervention in Libya in 2011.

The environment generated since then has exacerbated cross-border criminal activity, transforming the region into a magnet for groups that threaten social stability and State authority, primarily because of the lack of resources and social stability, thus generating a climate of violence and fear. We note the progress and will of the Governments to cooperate in combating the threat, in which the international community plays important role in preventive action and implementation of sustainable development initiatives, over and above the military solutions.

Today, almost a year after it was signed, we remain committed to the success of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and appreciate the role played by the international partners, especially the African States and the Algerian mediation team. The best way to overcome festering conflicts such as that is by way of a political accord between the parties, prioritizing national ownership with the appropriate involvement of third parties in pursuing dialogue and harmony. Similarly, we value the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, while remaining aware of the difficult environment in which it is mobilized.

On the other hand, we are concerned about the presence of the Boko Haram terrorist group in the Lake Chad basin and nearby areas. We commend the efforts of Nigeria, Chad, the Niger and Cameroon, as part of the Multinational Joint Task Force, to fight that terrorist organization and hope that the threat will shortly come to an end. We also welcomed the regional security summit held in Abuja on 14 May, which brought together the political will of regional and international actors in favour of strengthening a common security strategy with a focus on preventing the spread of terrorism.

From the Venezuelan perspective, structural solutions to the problems of peace should be promoted, with a vision of sustainable development and a focus on achieving the economic and social progress of societies as a whole. Of course that is a long-term task, but it must begin by prioritizing development projects that will, in turn, impact on other sectors, including peace and security.

The particular geographical features of the region, which is predominantly a desert climate, impact on other social and economic activities, as well as access to water and food, but it is not a new phenomenon. We do not believe that there is necessarily a direct or automatic relationship between environmental change and armed conflicts; rather, conflicts are fueled by the destruction of State capacity and the interests of third parties in promoting instability, which results in increasing terrorism and crime.

We believe that the major challenges of climate change and its impact on the daily lives of millions of people, as exemplified by the El Niño phenomenon and its terrible floods and droughts, must be addressed through full compliance with the recently signed Paris Agreement and through the organs authorized for that goal by their broad and democratic character — like the General Assembly — avoiding jeopardizing the climate agenda while focusing on addressing the causes of the conflicts. While we welcome the initiative to address the challenges of peace and security affecting the Sahel, we believe that this Council is not the appropriate political forum to address environmental issues arising from climate change.

The complex humanitarian situation in the Sahel today is affecting more than 20 million people. It is the result of armed conflict; displacement; lack of access to services, water and food; diseases and natural disasters. It calls for strenghtening State capacities, fulfilling commitments made by the international community to support the region, and new commitments in favour of the most critical sectors.

Venezuela takes note of the attention focused on the region, through various national, multinational and international initiatives to improve the security situation in the Sahel, particularly States' policies to strengthen their own security sectors. We reiterate our strong support for the Group of Five Sahel — composed

of Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Niger and Mali — the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel and the Nouakchott Process, which have actively contributed to the implementation of social and security initiatives with significant success, including in the political sphere. We call for the harmonious coordination of those policies, together with the international community, to advance the common goal of a safer region, always bearing in mind the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly with regard to the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples.

The situation and geographical conditions of the Sahel and the extent of recent events have made it a particularly sensitive region, used as a channel or route of migration flows having an extraordinary human impact in the Mediterranean region. We call for the renewed impetus that motivates us to fight the human trafficking mafias to also lead to thought and consistency on the part of some international actors so as not to compromise the security situation in the African States through military interventions and armed conflicts whose characteristics have a global scope and particularly affect the most vulnerable civilian population on all continents.

Africa has been a historical victim of ambition and of the plundering of its natural resources by more powerful countries. It has paid the consequences through decades of violence and armed conflict, almost always driven from the outside. We affirm our belief that the path to peace in Africa, and in many other parts of the world, will come by ensuring that development projects and strategies, and the proper administration of policies and natural resources, are the sovereign responsibility of each people and each Government and aimed at achieving peace and sustainable development.

In conclusion, we would like to express our support to Mr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, and our full confidence in the road map laid out in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and in the projects of the specialized agencies and regional organizations, such as Office for West Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union, as sustainable political and economic paths towards peace in the Sahel.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's meeting, and the delegation of Spain for initiating it. We also thank all of today's briefers for their very useful presentations.

Climate change in the Sahel, along with desertification and land degradation, is one of the contributing factors stymying the development prospects of the countries of the region. It also has serious security implications, since the shrinking of the natural resources vital to economic development breeds competition and rivalry among communities and countries, spoiling relations, severing ties, escalating tensions and even provoking clashes. Global warming was already affecting the region's stability well before the adoption of the Paris climate change agreement.

My delegation therefore is convinced that a better understanding of the ways in which climate change multiplies security risks can help to manage and reduce the negative effects of environmental degradation. In that context, we believe that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should formulate strategic guidance on combating desertification and land degradation and ensuring the sustainable management of pasture land. To that end, we also look forward to closer cooperation and evolving synergies among UNEP, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and other multilateral environmental mechanisms. Ukraine believes that the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) should tackle the issue of protecting the environment in areas affected by armed conflict. We have already introduced a relevant UNEA draft resolution — the first of its kind — that we hope will see light quite soon.

As recent lessons have taught us, voids that are the result of underdevelopment — such as a lack of education opportunities, stagnant or declining economic activity, limited growth prospects for small businesses, weak job markets and so forth — are quickly filled by radical forces eager to exploit public discontent in their pursuit of their own agendas. In that regard, Ukraine is concerned about the threat posed by terrorist activities in the Sahel region. Terrorist groups — specifically Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab and their affiliates — have a destabilizing effect on the region's peace and security, with dire humanitarian consequences for civilians, including the most vulnerable of them — women and children.

In that context, Ukraine commends the efforts of national Governments in the Sahel to address the issue of the changing nature of the threat of terrorism and

to prioritize it at both the international and regional levels. We also welcome the outcomes of the Second Regional Security Summit, held on 14 May in Abuja on the initiative of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and aimed at strengthening the regional response to the threat posed by Boko Haram.

Along with combating terrorists through military means, it is also vital to suppress their financing and prevent them from acquiring weapons. Key elements for achieving that goal are the effective management of weapon stockpiles; the speedy disposal of small arms and light weapons during disarmament, demobilization and reintegration campaigns; the enhancement of cooperation on border controls between the countries of the region; and bringing down the transnational organized criminal networks responsible for arms trafficking in the region.

However, to ensure that the effects of counter-terrorism efforts are lasting, we should consolidate and implement a wide range of preventive measures that promote social and economic development and dialogue, respect for the rule of law and human rights, the engagement of women and young people in strategic communications, and investments in human capital, job creation and education. Such steps will help to reduce the appeal of extremist groups and support for them and will strengthen resilience against them, thereby preventing the Sahel from becoming fertile ground for the recruitment of terrorists among its tens of millions of disadvantaged people.

Mr. Taula (New Zealand): I would like to thank our briefers — Mr. Chambas, Mr. Laborde, Ms. Barbut and Ms. Ibrahim — for their insights. The challenges they outlined have implications that go far beyond the Sahel and its people. They relate to wider security issues on the Council's agenda, as well as to refugee and migration issues addressed by other bodies of the United Nations and its Member States.

One of the recurring themes of discussions on conflict prevention and resolution has been to call for the Council to be more alert to the underlying drivers of conflict. Tackling the symptoms of conflict without adequately identifying and addressing its underlying causes is a recipe for failure and continued instability. It is therefore entirely appropriate, in our view, that the Security Council should focus attention on the underlying drivers of instability in the Sahel and consider their implications for conflict in the region.

The causes of instability in the Sahel are complex and varied. They include underdevelopment and economic and political marginalization. Those factors have fed unrest and instability and have made the whole region vulnerable to encroachment by extremists and transnational criminal networks. As we have heard from our briefers, those trends are undoubtedly being magnified and exacerbated by the acute and intensifying challenges posed by droughts, irregular rainfall, desertification and other climate and ecological changes.

What we have heard today is a further manifestation of the reality highlighted during the Council's open debate on the security challenges faced by small island developing States (see S/PV.7499), convened during New Zealand's presidency in July 2015. Environmental degradation and climate change can result in major security concerns for small, vulnerable States with limited resilience and capacity to adapt, whether they are small islands or large, arid continental spaces. Most of the tools for addressing such specific climate-related challenges lie outside the Council Chamber. But it is important that our discussions of the Sahel are underpinned by a firm understanding of those manifold challenges. They must be factored into our conflict analysis and integrated into our strategies for maintaining peace and security in the region.

One of the Council's major focuses regarding the Sahel region has rightly been addressing the threat posed by terrorism. We have placed heavy emphasis on counter-terrorism measures, which play an essential role in disrupting the terrorist networks that thrive where governance is weakest. But they are not sufficient. It is also necessary to consider the economic, social and climatic drivers that facilitate terrorist recruitment. As Ms. Ibrahim mentioned, if extremist groups such as Boko Haram can offer a few hundred dollars to poor, desperate people who are facing climate-induced hardship and therefore have only grim and uncertain choices in providing for their families, we should not be surprised that many, tragically, have chosen to join them.

The multiple drivers of conflict in the Sahel also remind us that it is a mistake to simply call every person who takes up arms a terrorist. In most cases, where individuals and minority groups have rebelled out of a sense of hopelessness, peace and security will be secured only through negotiation and peace processes

designed to accommodate their grievances and achieve rehabilitation and reintegration.

New Zealand has consistently stressed the importance of various actors working together to address peace and security issues. We have, for example, been active proponents of encouraging both the African Union Peace and Security Council and our Security Council to improve their working methods and work cooperatively with subregional bodies. That principle is just as important in the Sahel region as it is elsewhere. In the Sahel, we are unfortunately faced with a situation where the problem is reasonably well-defined but the solution is lost among a surfeit of strategies. Duplicative, contradictory or competitive approaches will simply serve to dissipate our effort and diminish the impact on the ground. In that regard, we welcome the recent consolidation of United Nations regional offices to create the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

New Zealand stands ready to discuss creative options to further rationalize existing efforts to deliver tangible results for the Sahel region and its people.

I thank Spain and Egypt for initiating this discussion today.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to thank you, Sir, and Spain for having initiated this very interesting debate, bringing closer to the Council a reality of which we need to take account, especially as we are dealing with a region that is very sensitive.

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who has just delivered the point of view of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). Mr. Ibn Chambas is in that Office, newly created to respond to the challenge, and I would like to thank him for his good briefing. Similarly, I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Paul Laborde, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate; Ms. Monique Barbut, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; and Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Coordinator of the Association des femmes peules autochtones du Tchad, for bringing us so close to the realities that she is living every day in the Sahel region.

The Sahel region is confronted with huge challenges: extreme poverty, food and malnutrition crises and conflicts, youth radicalization, violent extremism, terrorism, transnational organized crime, natural disasters and the ravages of climate change.

With regard to the security situation, owing to the spike in armed conflict and violence throughout the region, Governments have been forced to spend additional resources to address security challenges, at the expense of social development. In northern Mali, which we just recently visited, the Lake Chad Basin and other areas of the Sahel region, the actions of armed groups, terrorists and transnational organized crime are having a devastating impact on civilians. As of December 2015, more than 4.5 million people were displaced, seeking refuge in already highly vulnerable communities. As violence and conflict escalate in the Lake Chad region and in northern Mali, millions of people are increasingly dependent on the generosity of their vulnerable neighbours and on humanitarian assistance.

Food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty in the Sahel region require a concerted effort by the international community in order to assist people affected by severe hunger and malnutrition. Humanitarian action in the Sahel is guided by the 2014-2016 Sahel Regional Strategic Response Plan. The three-year strategy aims at delivering coordinated and integrated life-saving assistance to people affected by emergencies, as well as at kick-starting a more tailored response to the food and nutrition crises affecting millions of people in the region.

Angola commends the humanitarian response personnel engaged in providing assistance to populations living in areas with very unsafe access, given the sheer scale and complexity of the challenge and the potential for further deterioration. While Governments of the region continue to deploy efforts with the international community to solve the humanitarian crisis, a new sense of urgency and commitment is required for a more effective response to the humanitarian threat. In that regard, Angola also welcomes the joint coordination by the countries of the region, especially the Group of Five Sahel.

The impact of climate change and natural disasters and the degradation of lands in the Sahel are other matters of extreme concern. Over the past decades, growing climate alterations and more frequent distress have pushed the Sahelian people to the brink of humanitarian disaster. Water for the region's agriculture, which is 98 per cent rain-fed, is getting scarcer, and water

availability per inhabitant has dropped by over 40 per cent over the past 20 years. Agriculture is affected by climate change, desertification and also the insecurity affecting the region, as areas suitable for agriculture are being occupied by armed groups, terrorists and transnational organized crime. That makes agricultural activities impossible, resulting in the extreme scarcity of food every year.

The shrinking of Lake Chad is a striking example of the environmental degradation in the Sahel region. Lake Chad, which previously straddled the borders of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, has over the last 50 years shrunk to a small percentage of its earlier size, making it more difficult for the people who depend on it for their livelihood. That forces them to dislocate in search of water and good land for agriculture, thereby causing the rise of inter-ethnic violence between the migrant people and the local communities residing in the fertile areas. Ms. Ibrahim indicated clearly for us the impact of climate change on the lands in this region that we are discussing this afternoon.

With 60 per cent of the region's population under 25 years of age, lacking education and unemployed, poverty and social exclusion provide fertile ground for disenfranchisement, grievances and radicalization. The perception that Governments neglect them easily draws youth to recruitment by extremist and terrorist groups operating in the Sahel region and beyond, making them easy prey for groups like Al-Qaida in the Islamic Sahel and Maghreb, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham in Libya, and Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, among others.

We commend the work of UNOWAS in the Sahel, in collaboration with the United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, regional and subregional organizations, donors and partners, for its contribution towards the implementation of several projects in various Sahel member States in order to materialize the United Nations Integrated Strategy Plan for the Sahel. The international community, and the United Nations in particular, should continue assisting the Sahel countries in the fight against terrorism and to overcome the challenges affecting the region. We particularly commend the role played by France to fight terrorism in the region, with special forces operating in coordination with the national armed forces of the countries of the region itself. The efforts of the Group of Five Sahel (G-5 Sahel) countries to organize joint security operations at the borders and their decision to create a multinational task force to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime in the Sahel translate the determination of those countries to fight terrorism in the region. The decision of the G-5 Sahel is similar to that of the Multinational Joint Task Force created by the Lake Chad Basin States and Benin, who joined forces to fight Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region.

In conclusion, we call on the Sahel member States to continue to join forces to decisively address the challenges affecting the region. We urge the international community to continue to support regional efforts in the maintenance of peace and security for the development and stability in the Sahel region.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): I wish to join earlier speakers in thanking all the briefers for their respective briefings, to which we have listened with much interest. We particularly appreciate the perspective of Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim in describing the harrowing difficulties endured by the people of the Sahel.

As noted by previous speakers and the briefers, an inhospitable climate, environmental degradation, food insecurity and malnutrition are some of the factors that ensure that life for the people of the Sahel is harsh and that make them extremely vulnerable. Their hardship is further compounded by violence, conflict and insecurity, which have risen at an alarming rate, particularly during the past few years. We wish to emphasize that the linkages between these so-called non-traditional threats and the peace and security situation in the region are real and have clearly resulted in increased suffering and deterioration of the quality of life for the people of the Sahel.

The wide-ranging nature of the threats faced by the Sahel and its population requires an equally comprehensive and holistic approach to reverse, or at the very least mitigate, their consequences. Therefore Malaysia believes that the discussion today is timely, and we thank the delegations of Egypt and Spain for organizing it.

Ongoing exposure to an extreme climate, coupled with erratic weather conditions causing increasingly severe and frequent flooding, as well as longer and unpredictable droughts, has resulted in crop failure and food insecurity across the Sahel. Such conditions exacerbate the region's pre-existing vulnerabilities, pushing its population to the brink of humanitarian disaster. A recent report by the United Nations

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs highlights that 4.5 million people have been newly displaced throughout the Sahel region, almost three times more than in 2012, just four years ago. The report further noted that the key drivers for such massive displacements include the adverse impacts of climate change as well as increased violence and conflict in the region. Such massive displacements exacerbate an already fragile humanitarian situation, placing both host States and those displaced at greater risk of insecurity and instability.

We share the concerns expressed regarding the rapidly deteriorating capacities of States and institutions in the region to provide essential services, including health, security, water, sanitation and education, as they struggle to cope with the massive influx of newly displaced persons. In that regard, we wish to commend the tireless work and perseverance of humanitarian actors and agencies on the ground, despite themselves being subject to persistent threats, especially from armed groups and criminal elements.

We are convinced that for the Sahel, climate change is a key driver of insecurity and instability. Drawing from the lessons of the Sahel, climate change, if left unchecked, could in fact become one of the most significant threat multipliers at the global level.

We also share the assessment that the pervading atmosphere of an impoverished existence and near hopelessness across the Sahel means that youths in the region are especially vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment by terrorists and violent extremist groups. It is imperative that this threat is addressed now, before it constitutes a bigger threat in the future. In that regard, we welcome initiatives, such as the ongoing collaboration between the European Union and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, to promote inclusive and credible deradicalization activities in the region. We also support the efforts currently being undertaken to counter terrorism and violent extremism in the region by the Group of Five Sahel (G-5 Sahel) countries, supported by France through Operation Barkhane. We note that the African Union is currently contemplating a similar effort.

We believe that the stabilization of the security situation in the Sahel is a key strategic element that must continue to be prioritized in plans and programmes at the national, regional and international levels. Therefore we welcome and support the continuing focus by the African Union (AU) on the Sahel and its emphasis on governance, security and development in its strategy for the region, mirroring the priorities of the United Nations itself. Recalling the open debate earlier this week on the future of the African Peace and Security Architecture (see S/PV.7694), we believe that there is scope for greater coordination between the AU and the United Nations on the Sahel to ensure the continuity and complementarity of the programmes and initiatives in the region.

On that note, Malaysia believes that the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) has a vital role to play in connecting the United Nations with regional and subregional actors, particularly the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the G-5 Sahel. UNOWAS should seek to improve the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. The need for better coordination among relevant entities should also be factored into the review of that Strategy.

The scale of the crisis faced by the Sahel region and its complexity and potential for further deterioration require our urgent attention and collective efforts. Additional resources must be mobilized not only to support the needs for development and for the consolidation of the rule of law and good governance, but also to break the cycle of crises and instability in the region. As a member of this Council, Malaysia remains committed to continue working closely with all regional and international partners and the countries in the region to address and find a comprehensive solution to the challenges in the Sahel.

Mr. Ilichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia pays particular attention to the developing situation in the Sahel and has consistently favoured active coordination between the United Nations and the African Union and subregional organizations to normalize it. We wish to recall that terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel have become increasingly pertinent during recent years.

The situation has sharply deteriorated since the situation in Libya was destabilized. The security situation is still negatively affected by porous borders, which enable the trafficking in drugs, weapons and other contraband. Without making progress on a settlement in Libya, it will not be possible to find a lasting solution to terrorism in the Sahel.

We are convinced that we should currently focus on rebuilding and strengthening the counter-terrorism potential of the States of the region, as required by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. In that regard, we would like to thank the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), Mr. Laborde, for his briefing. We highly value the efforts of CTED in assessing the real needs of States in terms of combating terrorism. Russia has always focused on building countries' capacities and providing bilateral support to train professionals, including law enforcement agents. Furthermore, we consider it crucial to work on implementing resolution 1624 (2005) by highlighting terrorism prevention, by making terrorism less attractive and by countering terrorist ideology and violent extremism.

With regard to the specific problem of desertification in the region, we agree that it undermines the traditional way of life and the economic potential of the countries in the region. At the same time, we believe that natural phenomena, including land and soil degradation caused by natural factors or human activities cannot a priori be regarded as a threat to international peace and security. Drought and land degradation could aggravate the situation in areas of conflict, the causes of which, in our opinion, can still be attributed to ineffective responses by the appropriate political institutions to emerging issues. The main platform for addressing desertification and land degradation is the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

When considering the problem of desertification in a cross-border context, we firmly believe there is a need to find mutually beneficial solutions based on partnership and respect for national sovereignty. We should also focus on fostering technical cooperation and training national staff on land use for countries in need. Naturally, the assistance provided should take into account the countries' specific national development needs and strategies, as well as regional aspects.

That said, we feel it is inappropriate for the Security Council to be directly involved. It does not have the relevant expertise and the necessary tools in this area. The Council's involvement could be counterproductive and lead the international community away from a search for practical solutions to combat land degradation. Not one of the briefers mentioned the role of the Security Council in combatting climate change and desertification, and that was not by chance.

In New York, real value could be added by holding substantive discussions on this topic in the framework of the specialized Second Committee of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, especially since the importance of addressing desertification and restoring degraded land in order to achieve sustainable development was emphasized in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (resolution 70/1), under Goal 15.

We believe that desertification is not the only challenge to food and economic security in the Sahel that might lead to radicalization and make it easier for terrorists to promote their ideologies and recruit adherents from among the hardest-hit segments of the population. We are convinced that the whole range of equally complex problems of the region needs to be addressed through the consistent implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. This is a useful initiative, which has proved its worth. We have only just begun to tap into its full potential by successfully implementing projects in several areas. We hope that the merging in February of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel with the United Nations Office for West Africa will create the necessary synergy to implement this strategy.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I join members of the Council in thanking our briefers for their varied, multidimensional briefings. Undoubtedly, the Security Council is in dire need of such a comprehensive vision, and it must undertake an in-depth analysis to identify the root causes of the conflicts we are dealing with.

The valuable briefings we heard have clearly shown that the compound and interlinked nature of the challenges confronting the Sahel region creates a complicated reality that requires solutions based on a comprehensive approach, with multiple instruments that deal with all the threats with the same level of attention. In confronting these varied challenges, international, regional and national efforts must be concerted and coordinated so as to prevent criminal and terrorist armed groups from exploiting any weaknesses in the region.

Egypt believes that the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel can be the appropriate political framework for coordinating and mobilizing all efforts

to deal with the challenges effectively. The effective implementation of the Strategy will produce a qualitative shift in the reality of the region. Therefore, Egypt agreed with the Secretary-General's proposal in January of this year to merge the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in order to maximize the logistical and human resources available and to find the means to achieve a true qualitative leap in the implementation of the Strategy, while concentrating on improving the national capacities of Sahel States.

We therefore believe that the review of the Strategy is of utmost importance in order to identify what progress has been achieved and the shortcomings in its implementation. We must identify the obstacles to implementation, both nationally and regionally. We also believe that future efforts to implement the Strategy must be sufficiently flexible to adapt to variables and escalating challenges in the African Sahel, especially the challenges related to climate change, environmental deterioration and the spread of terrorist ideologies and organized crime throughout the region.

It is important to mobilize international attention to increase awareness of these new threats in the Sahel. We must encourage international and regional partners to invest in building national and local capacities to mitigate environmental crises and to ensure more sustainable local communities. Therefore, Egypt calls for UNOWAS to ensure that future reports provide a vision for the implementation of the Strategy in the Sahel, including figures, statistics and time frames for the implementation of programmes and activities. How did the Office respond to national priorities and the needs of the peoples of the region? That would help the Security Council be aware of the level of implementation and its shortcomings.

Resolution 2282 (2016), on the review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, adopted on 27 April, was an excellent addition to the efforts to implement the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. The direction for the Security Council and the General Assembly in that resolution gives priority to the establishment of a comprehensive political framework for efforts to achieve sustainable peace in which political, security, economic and social dimensions are taken into account. Indeed, we believe the Peacebuilding Commission must serve as the political forum for achieving synergy among the United Nations efforts.

Egypt is prepared to cooperate with the peoples and Governments of the Sahel through the programmes implemented by the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development, which builds national capacities in various fields based on the principles of partnership and national ownership.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Mr. Buyoya.

Mr. Buyoya (*spoke in French*): At the outset I wish to thank the President for this opportunity to take the floor and inform the Council of the activities of the African Union in the Sahel region. My intervention will focus on four points: first, a reminder of the data and principles that underpin the African Union strategy in the Sahel; secondly, the African Union contribution to meeting the security challenges; thirdly, meeting the challenges of governance; and fourthly, meeting development challenges.

The African Union commitment to the Sahel region dates to the Libyan crisis. In December 2011, a joint United Nations-African Union mission was despatched to the Sahel region. The idea was to examine the impact of the return of migrants on the stability of the countries of the region. A report was published by the mission and considered by experts in March 2012, in Addis Ababa. Recommendations were made to both the African Union and the United Nations. Those recommendations laid the basis of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. Those very recommendations will also inspire the African Union strategy for the Sahel, adopted on 11 August 2014 by its Peace and Security Council.

Through the strategy, the African Union is seeking to respond to the three challenges identified in the Sahel: security, governance and development. In the area of security, we have seen that the Sahel region has experienced many problems that have been touched upon here. Those include security problems, terrorism; smuggling, including the trafficking of drugs, other products and humans; migration, rebellions and domestic conflicts linked, among other things, to competition for natural resources caused by climate change.

In the area of governance, it has been noted that the countries in the Sahel region have several problems.

In particular, they are vast countries. Their populations have been nearly abandoned to the margins of the region, particularly in areas experiencing enormous economic and environmental fragility. Those countries are fragile in terms of governance. They have access to limited resources. They do not fully control their territory. There are problems of corruption.

With respect to development, those areas are very poor. They are some of the poorest areas in Africa — indeed, in the world — and their populations are exploding. In terms of the ecosystem, the situation is very fragile. Certain areas see regular food insecurity, natural disasters, flooding and droughts.

The link between security and climate change, for example, has been established by examining the situation in northern Mali. It is common knowledge that the people who unleashed hostilities in northern Mali were Touareg Malians. They are basically Arabs who emigrated to Libya in 1973 because of a terrible drought that occurred at the time. In that case, we see that the link between insecurity and climate change in the Sahel is a reality that has been proven by the history of the region.

In the African Union strategy document, we start by defining the Sahel, because there is no common understanding of a definition of the Sahel. For us, the Sahel consists of the area straddling the southern Maghreb and northern sub-Saharan Africa, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. It includes numerous countries, which is important to highlight. In discussing the African Union strategy, we consider the African Union in its entirety — namely, the Commission, the regional economic organizations, and a number of specialized agencies in Africa involved in development or governance. There are organizations that are dedicated to the environment, such as the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel.

The role of the African Union, in cooperation with other international community organizations, is to help countries in the region cope with the three challenges identified — security, governance and development — without assuming their national roles. If we consider the three challenges, we believe that the African Union can bring a comparative advantage, in particular in the areas of security and governance. Why is the African Union investing in security in the Sahel, whereas, normally, according to the rules of the organization, the regional economic communities deal with security? The answer to that question is very clear. It lies in the fact that the Sahel region straddles several regional economic communities, including the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States, East African Monetary Union in the North and Intergovernmental Authority on Development and other organizations in eastern African.

What is the contribution of the African Union to security? As many have said, there are three hot issues involving security in the Sahel. The situation in northern Mali is well known. Unfortunately, it is not improving despite the signature of the Peace Agreement. There are still the usual terrorists movements — Ansar el-Dine, the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb — who are operating there against Mali forces, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the population, and so on. Today, we also have what I could term a new generation of terrorist groups, including the Macina Liberation Front. We see that instead of decreasing, insecurity is even extending not only southwards but throughout West Africa. Incidents in Ouagadougou and the Grand-Bassam reflect that trend.

The second cause of a lack of security lies in the countries of the Lake Chad Basin. We have heard for about 10 days now that the situation is under control, but we are aware that there is still a very high level of violence.

The third source of insecurity arises from the situation in Libya, where the situation is confused but poses a real threat to the entire Sahel region, particularly with the presence of the Islamic State there. Heretofore, young people from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa went to Syria and Iraq to be trained; today they do not need to travel so far. They can go to Libya.

What is the contribution being made by the African Union? From the beginning of the crisis in Mali, the African Union has been working on the liberation of northern Mali, on mediation and follow-up of the Ouagadougou Agreement and Algiers Platform, and in following up on the peace agreements. The African Union participates in the technical commission on security that monitors the ceasefire, and in the committess on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, integration and security sector reform.

The second aspect of African Union involvement is to promote regional security cooperation via the Nouakchott Process, whose emphasis is on information exchange. For example, every two months we bring together the heads of the security and information services from 11 Sahel countries. Every six months, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers of 11 Sahel countries come together because we find that political confidence is engendered by security cooperation. Today, it is an established fact that regional cooperation is the way forward. It yields results in the countries of the Lake Chad Basin. It yielded results following the Grand-Bassam attacks. Four countries of the region joined forces to investigate the networks of the perpetrators of those attacks, and the results are tangible. We must therefore continue along that path. I think that is what emerged also from the Abuja Summit recently.

Another dimension of African Union involvement the assessement, undertaken at the request of the Heads of State of the countries in the region, of the situation in northern Mali and to see how the African Union and the countries of the region can come together to strengthen the fight against terrorism. In that regard, an the report of the assessment mission will soon be issued.

My next point involves the contribution of the African Union to governance and the political realm. In Mali, the African Union was at the very heart of the peace process since Ouagadougou and Algiers, and is today involved in the implementation of the Peace Agreement. The African Union is chairing the subcommittee of the follow-up committee addressing political and institutional matters. We know that this problem is at the heart of what we could term the implementation of the Peace Agreement, which is barely gaining momentum, although we still believe that the prospects for peace in Mali are real because the signatories of the Peace Agreements still believe in it, thanks to the massive political and economic support of the international community.

With regard to Libya, the African Union is working via neighbouring countries and the dispatch of a special envoy and an international Libya monitoring group. In the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the African Union has strongly supported the use of the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram. In other countries of the region in the Sahel, we practice preventative diplomacy and closely monitor developments in those countries when it comes particularly to elections, especially in the Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso. The African Union is also involved through certain projects and programmes to promote or support good governance, particularly decentralization, deradicalization, support for electoral processes, and human rights.

Economically, the African Union has two items on its agenda. First is the mobilization of African institutions working in the economic sphere, such as the African Development Bank, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and several departments of the African Union Commission. The second involves the coordination of Sahel strategies. Given the multiplicity of such strategies, it was agreed in November 2013 that a coordination framework would be established for those strategies, to be managed by the countries of the region. Mali chaired the framework for today years; today Chad is in the Chair. The African Union and the United Nations provide the secretariat for what we have called the Ministerial Coordination Platform of Sahel Strategies.

In conclusion, the Sahel remains a regional rife with difficulties. With respect to security issues, two situations deserve the ongoing focus of the Council. The first is the situation in northern Mali, where despite all that has been done by the international community there is no improvement. Something must therefore be done to avert a future in which the terrorists will have gained the upper hand over the rest of the international community. The second is the situation in Libya. So long as Libya remains unstable, there will be no peace in the Sahel. It is as simple as that. These issues must therefore remain on the Council's agenda.

Turning to development, we happily note that there is continued interest in the Sahel, but the region's needs are huge and the international community's efforts must be long-term. One felicitous development in the region that must be supported is the assumption of ownership of all these strategies on the part of countries of the region. I refer here to the establishment of the Group of Five (G-5) Sahel, which emerged as a result of all the debates held since 2013 under the Nouakchott Process. The G-5 must be supported, but we must not forget that the Sahel region covers an area greater than that, and that in order to meet certain challenges, such as those of security and development, we must cast our gaze beyond the G-5.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to Mr. Losada.

Mr. Losada (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me first thank Egypt, as President of the Security Council, as well as Spain and the other members of the Council for providing the European Union the opportunity to enumerate the many efforts we are making in the Sahel region towards the construction of what we consider, or wish to consider, a strategic, multifaceted partnership between the European Union and the Sahel.

I also wish to thank and commend the briefers for their outstanding statements early in this meeting, which have not only enriched the debate on the Sahel, but also demonstrate the fact that the Sahel is and must remain high on the international agenda.

(*spoke in French*)

The Sahel is the theatre of many crises and represents a multitude of challenges, but — we must not forget — opportunities as well, such as the Peace Agreement in Mali signed just one year ago, and the consolidation of regional cooperation within the Group of Five (G-5) Sahel. At the same time, however, we are witnessing growing irregular migration in African territory and towards Europe, a rise of extremist and terrorist forces, as Mr. Laborde eloquently described, and the effects of climate change, including accelerated desertification in the Sahel region, as laid out by Ms. Barbut and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ibn Chambas.

I wish to make a point here. At the end of the day, we must ensure the presence of the State if we are to fight terrorism, because a vacuum of governance is the oxygen of terrorism. I shall make four observations in this regard: the European Union Sahel strategy, Mali, the Group of Five (G-5) Sahel and the fundamental question of coordination.

My first point is the strategy and actions of the European Union. The European Union was the first to adopt — even before the crisis in Mali — a strategy and comprehensive approach for the Sahel in 2011, which gave rise to a regional action plan adopted in April 2015. Its aim is to strengthen our political dialogue with the subregion and to support the countries of the Sahel region, now extended to all the countries of the G-5 Sahel.

The European Union and its member States are strongly committed to the Sahelian countries, in particular through a comprehensive approach that closely links development issues to security issues, short-term emergency measures and support for structural reforms in the medium and long terms. For us, this is very clear. There is no security without development, but there is no development without security. The two are very closely linked and form the very basis of the European Union's 2011 strategy.

The European Union is to allocate more than €5 billion to the Sahel between 2014 and 2020 through its various instruments of cooperation and humanitarian activities. That amount is expected to exceed €8 billion with the actions of member States included. Other European Union instruments include the Common Security and Defence Policy missions such as the European Union Sahel Capacity-Building Missions in Mali and the Niger, the European Union Mali Training Mission, and the actions of member States.

At the Valletta Summit in November 2015, an emergency trust fund of the European Union was adopted in favour of stability and the fight against the root causes of irregular migration and the phenomenon of displaced persons in Africa. The Sahel and Lake Chad Basin account is funded to €1 billion. Almost 30 projects were decided in January and April, amounting to nearly €382 million. On 13 June, the operational committee will meet to approve new projects. I would also recall that the terrorist threat in these two regions is a reality that we can only fight together. It is to strengthen this cooperation that the European Union supports the Multinational Joint Task Force in the fight against Boko Haram. It will, of course, continue to do so.

Climate change and its impact on the Sahel, as mentioned today by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, is also a clear priority in the approach of the European Union. Europe was the heart of the historic agreement reached at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and is fully committed to its implementation, particularly in the Sahel through the strengthening of the resilience capacities of the vulnerable populations — the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative — adaptation to climate change through the support provided in the framework of the programmes of the Global Alliance against Climate Change, and the integrated and sustainable management of natural resources.

The Sahel countries are increasingly faced with desertification and land degradation, which threaten food security, livelihoods, population stability and security and, more broadly, the economies of these country, which rely heavily on agriculture. As the Permanent Representative of Spain put it so well, this is ground zero of global warming. The European Union is a major player in the Convention to Combat Desertification, whose implementation inalienable right actively supports through a wide range of initiatives, such as our support for the Great Green Wall, Action Against Desertification, the RIVER project and other projects to promote sustainable land management. The European Union and its member States are determined to continue to support the Sahel countries in this fight, which remains essential to the long-term prosperity, stability and security of the region.

My second point concerns Mali, to which President Buyoya referred. I take this opportunity to recall the historic opportunity offered by the implementation of the peace and reconciliation agreement in Mali. We must remember that we are far from where we were a year ago, when there were still clashes among the various factions. There can be no stability in the Sahek without stability in Mali. That is therefore a priority goal. I want to emphasize the strong commitment of the European Union and its member States in Mali, alongside the United Nations, using all technical and financial instruments, and to acknowledge the efforts being made by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and Operation Barkhane against these many challenges to peace in Mali and the Sahel.

My third point concerns the G-5 Sahel. The European Union welcomes the establishment of G-5 Sahel, which we support at the political level. The Group demonstrates the firm commitment of these countries to pooling their efforts to confront, together and in coordination, the many cross-border challenges in the areas of security and development.

The Summit of Heads of States of the G-5 Sahel, held on 6 November 2015 in N'Djamena in the presence of the High Representative and Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, set the goals to be achieved with the adoption of a European Union-G-5 Sahel road map. The road map identifies the mechanisms for dialogue, consultation and cooperation, and the main activities and joint initiatives planned for 2016. Security, border management, the fight against terrorism, the issue of youth and radicalization, trafficking and organized crime are at the heart of our shared priorities. I take this opportunity to emphasize that another meeting between the High Representative and the Foreign Ministers of the G-5 countries is scheduled for 17 June in Brussels, where they will analyse the implementation of our road map and the way ahead.

My final point concerns the coordination among the international actors. Coordination, I believe, is at the centre of our debate. If we count all the various initiatives and strategies on the Sahel, I believe that there may now be 16 or even more. It is clear that there is a real need for coordination. Such coordination does exist. President Buyoya referred earlier to the Platform and other institutions. I want to emphasize the excellent coordination between the European Union and the United Nations, which is illustrated, inter alia, by the participation of Mr. Mahamat Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif and Head of MINUSMA, in the European Union Political and Security Committee in Brussels, as well as by many meetings and fruitful exchanges between the institutions and their special representatives, in particular Special Representative Ibn Chambas. There is also very close cooperation with the African Union and other institutions, such as the Economic Community of West African States, and with Operation Barkhane. But we must work very hard within that coordination; otherwise, we will find ourselves working against ourselves. It goes without saying that we must work together.

Finally, it is clear that these challenges can really be met only in a framework of democratic governance and human rights, which includes the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, democratic principles, the rule of law and equal access to justice and basic social services, the fair and sustainable management of natural resources, and of course good governance.

That is the basis of the strategic partnership between Africa and the European Union. Let me finish by quoting the High Representative in regard to building a strategic partnership based on the principle of African ownership. Her adage sums up our desire to act. "We do not work for Africa; no, we work with Africa."

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.